

Legislative Testimony
Public Health Committee
SB 993 AAC Dental Assistants and Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary
Friday, March 15th, 2013
Jonathan B. Knapp, DMD

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health committee, my name is Jonathan Knapp and I have been practicing dentistry for 20 years in the town of Bethel. I am a Past President of the Connecticut State Dental Association (CSDA), and I currently chair The Council on Dental Practice at the American Dental Association. I am a five year member of the Mission of Mercy Steering Committee and one of the +1,500 dentists who provide services to the patients of the CT Dental Health Partnership. I have also actively participated in scope of practice discussions since 2004, culminating in my voicing of strong support for the scope review process as developed by the Program Review and Investigations Committee and passed by the General Assembly. I thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you in favor of Senate Bill 993 An Act Concerning Dental Assistants and Expanded Function Dental Auxiliaries.

Having been involved in efforts to address dental workforce needs, career ladder issues and access to care barriers, I have been immersed in the various models that you have probably heard mentioned. There are EFDA's, CDA's, CDHC's, RDH's, DHAT's, ADHP's, and ADT's, and even APRN's have been brought up in these discussions. Given your responsibilities as legislators to address the needs of our state while also protecting the health of our citizens, it is critical that you understand the very real differences in these models as they relate to the delivery of oral health care, and to each other.

The Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary, as proposed, is a proven model that has existed for over 40 years. It is currently utilized in 40+ other states and extensively in the US military. It is a model that has increased the efficiency and capacity to serve patients across the spectrum of practice settings. In addition to bringing this universally acknowledged and respected team member into our state, I commend SB993 for addressing long overdue modernization measures that will finally bring all levels of dental assisting in Connecticut into parity with what is otherwise universally accepted.

With regard to the scope of dental team members and career ladders, apparently there are rumors circulating that this bill will impinge on the scope of functions currently performed by hygienists. That is absolutely not the case. The bill specifically prohibits assistants from performing procedures such as cleanings, which will remain within the scope of hygiene. In fact, the bill includes the very provisions that were previously accepted by the hygienists. It expands opportunities to add to their skill set thereby adding more career options.

Finally, I urge you to support SB993 and the modernization of dental assisting in our state as a standalone issue. Discussion of the other dental workforce models has lead to significant confusion and controversy because they are shrouded in misinformation and misconceptions; about where they originated, where they have been utilized, their record of safety and effectiveness, and their similarities and differences with regard to other models. The measures in SB993 regarding dental assisting and EFDA's are straightforward and clear.

Thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony in favor of SB993. Please support this bill so that we can appropriately modernize dental assisting in Connecticut - for the profession - and most importantly for the benefit of our citizens.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Respectfully,

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